

Women's Liberation, a counter-resolution by Linda Blackwood
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WOMEN'S LIBERATION, A COUNTER-RESOLUTION

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ROSS DOWSON WEBSITE EDITOR COMMENT:

Readers are referred to an earlier "Contribution to the Central Committee Plenum on Women's Liberation" -- March 1973 DB 33 by also by Linda Blackwood (text in W10), as well as a December 1972 document "Toronto Women's Caucus: A Two-Year Experience in a Cross-City Women's Liberation Group" by three LSA activists (text in W10). (DB 23)

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The unfolding struggle of women around the world is an integral part of the overall radicalization taking place to-day in opposition to the capitalist system of exploitation and oppression.

This struggle arises out of the intensifying contradictions of capitalism. The possibilities that are widely known to exist that would provide the material and scientific means to free women, and on the other hand the deep rooted resistance imbedded in the capitalist system to the fulfillment of the needs and aspirations of women have spurred a growing consciousness -- feminism.

Women are challenging the myth of their biological inferiority, the traditionally held views of their role as wife and mother, and as a source of cheap labor. Women are moving out in struggle. None of the institutions of capitalism remain untouched by these challenges. Women are challenging the church, the schools, the corporate managers and the political parties, etc.

Capitalist society itself rests on the exploitation and oppression of the majority while the power and wealth remains in the hands of a few. The struggle of women for their freedom is an integral part of the total struggle that is taking place at every level against the capitalist system.

MARXIST ANALYSIS

In the 1970 LSA/LSO convention resolution entitled. "The Socialist Strategy for Women's Liberation" we welcomed the rising feminist movement as "a powerful indicator of the deepening radicalization taking place in Canada today". The goal of this movement we said was "not just women's liberation but the liberation of all humanity from the deep sexual, psychological and economic oppression."

Women have not always been oppressed as a sex. Before the development of private property, social classes and the family, women were the economic and social leaders in a society based on communal property. It was only with the relatively recent development of the institutions of class society that women's status changed and the patriarchy was established.

With the development of the nuclear family women assumed a subservient role as wife and mother. The family serves the needs of class society. Its function is to place total responsibility on the individual unit for the reproduction and sustenance of the human species for its entry into the work force.

The family inculcates all the norms and values of capitalist society -- children learn obedience -- women are taught that they are inferior and prepared for their role as wife and mother. This "sacred" role is used to justify discrimination in education, in careers, politics, and society as a whole.

In their struggle against their conditions women are laying the basis for the destruction of this oppressive relationship and the formation of new human relationships.

ROOTS OF THE NEW FEMINISM IN CANADA

Women in Canada are faced with the same contradictions and crisis felt by women in the other capitalist countries around the world. As the traditional institutions change to keep pace with the needs of capitalism, new roles are thrust upon women. They are being driven out of the stifling confines of the home and family into the work force.

This process is causing women to make demands that meet the needs that arise from their changing role. Beginning with the demand for the vote in the early part of this century women are today raising the demands for equal pay, daycare, adequate education, and full access to birth control and abortion.

In the last fifty years the role of women has undergone the most profound change in history. Advances in technology have greatly eased the burden and drudgery of women's work in the home. While the sweeping processes of urbanization have brought women into access with modern technology and closer contact with one another at the same time they have brought the contradictory phenomena of the modern suburb with its personal isolation and alienation.

Modern medicine has extended the human life span -- this has meant that women no longer spend their entire lifetime giving birth to and raising children. The widening knowledge of birth control and abortion has also allowed women greater freedom. At the turn of the century the average Canadian woman of fifty years of age had reared six children; in 1961 (before widespread use of the pill) the average woman of fifty had three children.

Unlike fifty years ago, women are more and more forced to leave home to work and supplement the family income. *The Royal Commission Report on the Status of Women in Canada* reported that 34% of Canadian workers are women. Half of these women are married, meaning that in addition to working for a boss all day, they maintain another job in the home as wife and mother. Paid menial wages in the first instance, they go unpaid for their domestic services.

The laws decreeing equal pay for equal work are little more than a professed principle for women in Canada today. In the academic world women with the same education and qualifications as men receive on the average \$2,262.00 less yearly. Women while constituting 34% of the work force receive less than 20% of the total income.

In general, only the most menial jobs are open to women. The majority of professions -- medicine, science, education etc. are dominated by men. Women are concentrated in the services and clerical industries. But wherever they work they hold the lowest positions. Only 2.35% of women workers find themselves in managerial positions (*Status Report*). Only 17% of Canadian women workers are unionized.

In the educational institutions women are systematically discriminated against at all levels. They make up only one third of enrolment at the university level. Women are streamed throughout their school years to view their role as worker secondary to duties as wife and mother. At the university level, women are found to be concentrated in arts courses. Upon graduation it is men who find the careers and money in the professions and financial world.

While the role of women is changing in Canada today and while new horizons continue to open up, the contradictions sharpen and the conditions women face -- lack of safe, legal abortion, lack of daycare, lower pay, menial jobs -- become more obvious. Women escape

the prison of the home only to be entrapped by the degradation of the work place.

In Quebec women suffer doubly as members of an oppressed nationality and an oppressed sex. Their wages are the lowest, their educational opportunities narrowest, etc. The ever-present and powerful Catholic Church only serves to underscore the oppression Quebec women face. All the sharper the struggle for abortion law repeal becomes in the face of the Church's opposition.

The capitalist system in Canada ensures women that they will continue to be oppressed as long as it prevails.

THE DEVELOPING FEMINIST MOVEMENT IN CANADA

The feminist sentiment in Canada has found many diverse expressions and taken on many different forms. It finds expression in the working class organizations like the NDP and the trade unions, and also in all other institutions -- the churches, schools, and the mass media.

There are two phenomena that are important to note, that have shaped the development of the feminist movement and have in turn been shaped by it. The first is the mass NDP labor party. The NDP has created on one hand, an extremely favourable situation in Canada which has accounted for a more sophisticated level of politics. The existence of the NDP and its support however minimal for the main demands of the women's liberation movement has served to give the ideas of feminism a much broader and serious hearing among the masses. For example, the current in the women's liberation movement that adheres to "man-hating" or "man is the enemy" analysis never received a broad hearing in Canada. One of the reasons for this was that the demands of women were raised within the NDP, giving the feminist movement a legitimate voice through which to work. Because the NDP was forced to take note of the radicalization of women, their gestures, however token, won a hearing among the masses. In particular, the campaign for repeal of the anti-abortion laws has received support from the NDP since the first public action of the campaign, the abortion caravan in 1970. This was the first big action on abortion anywhere.

On the other hand, the NDP tends to inhibit the development of an independent mass action oriented feminist movement in the sense that, as a reformist party, it gives certain credibility to the concept that the capitalist system can reform itself and grant the demands of women.

The other important feature of the feminist movement in Canada today has been the ruling class' ability to encompass and mollify sectors of radicalizing women. In particular, the present government and its predecessor have paid lip service to the demands of women through the setting up of the Royal Commission on Women, and the report which affirmed and publicized the facts of the widespread discrimination women face. The government has funded in large part the activities of the status groups across the country which were set up to work for the implementation of the report's recommendations. The government is in the process of setting up a federal human rights commission, or a ministry of women to further encompass the feminist movement within the system.

The Trudeau government is footing the bill for a study of recommendations into a wages-for-housewives scheme. Recently, an Ontario government official said that the priority in promotion would be given to women in preference over men even if they didn't have the same qualifications. Some universities like the U. of M (*ontreal*) have set up pilot programs to allow more women into faculties where they have been traditionally excluded. The university administrations have readily set up women's studies courses when the demand became apparent. Such activities as women's centres and women's festivals often have government (*support*)

behind them. Many so-called Marxists from the New Left have opted for these centres and courses which have served to turn the feminist movement inward, and away from the struggle against the state and its institutions. The ruling class, through its control of the media, through such magazines as *Chatelaine* and *Ms.*, have attempted to convince women that they can be liberated by changing their heads -- that the problem is one of individual women and, not a social problem.

For all the varied attempts by the ruling class to buy off or siphon off the discontent of women, there is one significant area where they have stood in firm opposition to the feminist movement. That is on the question of repeal of the abortion laws. The movement for abortion law repeal has become the focus for women's struggles in Canada at this time. The abortion campaign has united women in action, posing mass action in the streets against the state. This campaign, with a clear demand against the (*Canadian capitalist, thus 'State' --ed.*) State, has enabled the as yet fragmented and tiny movement to voice the aspirations of millions of women. It is the only women's liberation struggle that has had an ongoing character aimed against the State.

A Revolutionary Strategy for Women's Liberation

Our strategy for women's liberation flows from our Marxist analysis of the oppression of women and our overall mass action strategy to participate and lead in the mobilization of mass forces against capitalism. Flowing from our analysis of women's oppression as a sex under capitalism, our strategy aims to unite women in a powerful movement aimed against the State.

In the 1970 LSA/LSO resolution on women's liberation, we outlined this strategy for the rising feminist movement: "our overall perspective in the women's liberation movement has been to participate in building a movement which will attract new layers of women, educate them and draw them into struggle around democratic and transitional demands." The document went on: "We seek to show women that their oppression is rooted in capitalism and to win them to an understanding that it is necessary to destroy this system to win their liberation. We want to fuse this struggle with other anti-capitalist struggles and carry them forward to the socialist revolution.

In the 1971 Plenum report of the LSA/LSO, we recognised that the mass sentiment that existed for women's liberation had not yet been crystallized "into a powerful anti-capitalist movement"-- and that this was our key task. We had to put forward a strategy that would build such a movement. We saw that opportunity in the repeal campaign. The repeal campaign from its very first action — the abortion caravan in 1970 — posed building a mass action movement against the State. It did this more clearly than any other issue or campaign.

Since the beginning of the women's liberation movement in Canada, we have welcomed the many different forms and expressions the movement has taken. Wherever possible, we want to continue to intervene in every aspect of the developing movement in order to move women into action.

Our experiences have taught us many lessons. As revolutionaries, we set priorities for our intervention. We focus in on openings like the repeal campaign that provide us with the greatest possibilities. As a small (nucleus) of the vanguard party, our resources have to be assigned, carefully. Our intervention has to be geared to achieve a maximum effect on radicalizing women and to unite them into struggle. That is why for example we do not sink big forces into consciousness-raising groups. Our experience has taught us that these groups have a very limited perspective. We attempt to win women to a perspective of moving out to build a mass movement, a force capable of reaching out to all women and directing them into action against

the State.

We have also seen that some struggles will be of a more transitory nature and will assume ad hoc organization forms. For example, the day care struggle at U of T (Toronto), or the struggles in the NDP, and as yet the struggles in and by the union movement have been of that nature. Our analysis and strategy are important to the development of these struggles. Wherever possible, we have to intervene to pose our strategy of mass action.

In particular, we want to speak to the needs of the working women of Canada who along with working men suffer the most oppressive forms of capitalist exploitation. It is precisely these working women who will have the most to gain from the struggles of women.

In the 1970 resolution we formulated the four main demands of the emerging movement as we saw them:

- 1) women must have complete control over their bodies -- the right to abortion and birth control
- 2) women must have complete access to education — abolish sex discrimination in the schools
- 3) women must be freed from their traditional role as mother — free 24hour day care — a State wage for homemakers
- 4) for complete equality of women at work

We have found these slogans to be highly relevant; we have raised them around the concrete struggles of women and in our general propaganda. In particular, the demand for repeal of the anti-abortion laws has become central to the struggles of women at this time.

Our experience in building the feminist movement has meant that our intervention has taken on different forms. At first, we intervened in the campus-oriented, new left women's liberation groups. The tendency toward sectarianism and elitism of these groups, combined with their rejection of the mass action-oriented repeal campaign, took them to a dead end. After a while they attracted no new forces and gradually drifted off the scene.

At the Saskatoon Women's Liberation Conference in the fall of 1970, it became obvious that a crisis of leadership existed in the feminist movement — the movement was floundering. Our forces took the initiative and broke from these dead-end groups. We had already initiated the Toronto Women's Caucus which emerged to play a key role in the developing women's liberation movement as well as the abortion campaign. The TWC and parallel groups which we initiated across the country attempted to counterpose a mass action strategy to the inward-turned character of the New Left groups. They were particularly effective in initiating popular actions, drawing women into action, and circulating TWC's paper *Velvet Fist* across the country. Many of the best activists of the TWC were recruited to our movement through our intervention.

What led us to shift the priority of our forces from these groups to building repeal coalitions was the realization that the abortion campaign had the potential to mobilize broad layers of women in struggle. The most effective means of doing this would be through coalitions — genuine united fronts united around the single issue demand of repeal of the anti-abortion laws. These coalitions would be able to unite broad forces both within and outside the feminist movement and build a movement that could win. The launching of the abortion coalitions proved us correct. A broad layer of forces including the United Church, the YWCA, etc. found their way to the campaign as a result.

Many comrades have expressed disagreement with the decision to shift the priority of our intervention in multi-issue groups like TWC to the building of the abortion campaign through the coalitions.

First of all, in weighing our limited forces our intervention has to be geared to achieve the greatest impact on the broadest possible layers of radicalizing women and to (unite) these layers of women in struggle against the capitalist system. How can we do that at this time?

Our approach is to unite women into action around issues that are of the most urgent and most popular concerns. We are for the single-issue approach because it has the possibility of uniting the broadest numbers (regardless of their opinion on other matters) into effective mass action. It is through action (in the abortion repeal struggle directed against the capitalist government and all its institutions) that women gain confidence in themselves and begin to understand the totality of their oppression. (emphasis by the Web Ed.)

The LSA/LSO of course enters into the experiences with its spokespersons and its press linking these experiences with the overall experience of the working class and projecting the need for socialist revolution. To win people to socialism we have to deal with reality, not abstractions. We have to take women where they are at, organize them and take them forward in struggle against the State.

Women in Canada are not moving primarily through unions, nor would it appear likely that the big mass struggles in the next period will emerge in the labor party, the NDP. (Only 17% of women workers are unionized and certainly women are not to be found in the majority within the NDP.) Where we do find women moving, women radicalizing on a large scale, is through concrete issues and struggles which are important to them such as abortion, day care, equal pay, etc. That's reality and that's what we have to deal with.

That doesn't mean however that we don't advocate women becoming unionized or don't want to get women workers out on a strike. Getting women to move on one issue or a series of issues or campaigns broadens their experience and understanding of such things as the nature of the State, capitalism and so on.

In 1971 at the LSA/LSO plenum we singled out abortion as a central issue to women's struggles. We saw that the potential existed to build a mass movement around this issue, a movement that could be a mass expression of the feminist struggle.

That's not to say that the winning of repeal will bring about the liberation of women or even fundamentally change their lives. It doesn't mean that we just dreamed up the abortion campaign, sucked the issue out of our thumbs, and decided to make this campaign the center of women's struggles in Canada. **Far from it; from the very beginning of the women's liberation movement in Canada, the leaders of the women's movement recognised the importance of this demand, and this struggle for women. The very first publication of the women's liberation movement was (by) the abortion-caravan, in 1970. The New Left types who led that action had learned from their experience (counselling women on abortions) that thousands of women were being denied safe legal abortions. They realized that their self-help counselling services were inadequate, that the law had to be changed, that the responsibility for this situation had to rest in the hands of the government. This led the women's movement to initiate the abortion campaign, and pose for the first time mass action against the state to win the demands of women. Only the sectarianism and ultraleft politics of the New Left leaders led them to reject this campaign because they rejected mass action.** (emphasis by the Web Ed.)

To the radicals who oppose our campaign as being liberal or reformist, we point out that the repeal demand meets with the real needs of women, especially working class women who suffer most from these restrictive laws. Rich women have always been able to get abortions; working class women have been forced to interrupt their education, lose their jobs, and support unwanted children.

The abortion campaign posed for the movement an action orientation. Only the repeal campaign has sustained itself on an ongoing basis and posed the necessity of action to broad layers of women. It is thus a crucial campaign for our forces to intervene in.

To say that the abortion campaign is at the center of our liberation work does not and should not exclude the intervention of our forces in other aspects of the developing movement. Unfortunately in the past period that has tended to happen in practice. That does not reflect a problem with our line but rather a problem of its tactical application.

The Abortion Campaign — What Stage?

Although there is a mass sentiment for abortion law repeal and although this sentiment continues to widen to broader and broader layers, including such traditionally conservative forces as the United Church, etc., it has not yet taken the form of an active and ongoing movement. The conditions are ripe for such a movement. For the women's liberation movement and our forces the challenge to give an organized expression to this mass sentiment remains before us.

Attempts of the ruling class to buy off and divert other aspects of the struggle, the liberalization of the laws which have allowed some women to get abortions without too much trouble (university students, professional women, etc.) are problems that would seem to dull the edge of a mass movement at this time. But they are not decisive.

The key problem is one of leadership. This exists on two levels, first the opposition or abstention of other left forces from this campaign. This includes the NDP, the Communist Party, and other radical forces. The other side of the problem is the role our movement is able to play as a tiny party with limited resources. The problem is not such subjective factors as the inexperience of women or their lack of consciousness.

The repeal campaign has been particularly effective in waging an ongoing campaign; activities such as demonstrations, petitions, conferences, etc. have succeeded in bringing many activists to the campaign as well as gaining a broad hearing for the struggle. The petition campaign, although not as successful as we had projected, reached almost 100,000 people across the country.

The coalitions have not significantly broadened to actively involve the support that exists for repeal. In fact, our efforts have not succeeded in drawing in any significant organizations other than ourselves as the ongoing activists and leaders of the campaign. The coalitions have to become genuine united fronts involving different forces on an ongoing basis.

The NDP has provided the repeal campaign with some excellent opportunities to develop its campaign. Grace MacInnis' repeal bill before the House of Commons allowed the repeal movement to make the petition supporting her bill for repeal much more effective. In Manitoba the campaign was able to gain considerable support through the Borowski affair. The Manitoba Abortion Action Coalition challenged the NDP to respond to the mass sentiment for repeal. Borowski's resignation from the Manitoba cabinet because of his reactionary views on abortion gained the repeal movement a considerable hearing in the NDP. In British Columbia and

Saskatchewan, we have been able to carry the repeal campaign more effectively to more people, because the NDP is in power in those provinces. In the last federal election, NDP leader David Lewis came out in support of the demand for repeal.

In conclusion, the campaigns for abortion law repeal through the "Canadian Women's Coalition" and the "Front Commun" have succeeded in uniting women across the country, posing an important demand on the State, and winning women to action. At this time, no other issue or campaign of women has emerged to challenge the government with an ongoing action campaign. This of course does not exclude other issues or campaigns from emerging, but it does mean that for the next period, the repeal campaign will likely remain at the center of women's struggles against the State.

The recent U.S. Supreme Court decision to legalize abortion in that country serves to inspire women to victory, adds further urgency to the campaign here, and challenges the women's movement to unite behind this campaign.

Other Aspects of Our Work in the Feminist Movement

In the past period our intervention in the feminist movement has faced some problems. In our eagerness to build the repeal movement, to move out and give a mass action expression to the women's movement, we have tended to ignore other aspects of the developing movement. Although our efforts in building the mass action abortion campaign are central at this time, it is important that we intervene in other developments to pose our overall mass action strategy there as well.

The feminist movement still appears to be groping and seeking expressions in different forms. Some of these forms will evolve as did the multi-issue groups which later became women's studies or women's centers primarily.

Women's Centers

These centers have appeared across the country. They tend to be inward, turned and anti-mass action. They are active in providing self-help services, consciousness raising groups, and classes on and about women. Many of the women attracted to these centers are open to new ideas. This provides us with an opportunity to discuss our socialist politics.

NDP

Our experiences in the NDP have been rich and varied. They include intervention in the women's committees of several years ago, the Waffle and Left Caucus experience, the Borowski affair, B.C. Women's Rights Committee, convention debates, the NDP's role in the abortion caravan, the petition and parliamentary bill, etc.

The NDP bureaucracy has not been able to dismiss the radicalization of women. From the very beginning they have had to pay lip-service to the demands of the movement. During the federal election, (*leader David*) Lewis was pressured to come out in support of repeal and the party ran E(leanor) Pelrine, a leading activist in the abortion campaign as a candidate.

Our work as feminists and socialists

Work within the NDP tends to be sporadic (perhaps B.C. is an exception). Ridings hold infrequent meetings, and activity is not of an ongoing nature. Nevertheless, our work in the

NDP is important. No doubt the upcoming federal convention will provide a big opportunity for women to voice their demands.

Women' s Studies

It is important for our campus work that we continue to intervene in these courses. They provide an opportunity for us to put forward all of our ideas and to sell our press and literature. These courses on the whole have not yet shown that they can go beyond a rather sterile discussion stage of some aspects of women's problems. One important exception has been Vancouver where we were able to intervene very effectively and involve women in the abortion campaign.

Our Tasks

From the very beginning of the feminist struggle our movement has stretched its meager resources to intervene and give leadership. Armed with the Marxist analysis and mass action strategy, we set out to convince women of the need for socialism and the necessity of building the Vanguard party. Already many feminists have joined the ranks of the LSA/LSO and participated in the task of making the Canadian revolution.

Our analysis has been crucial. Through the pages of *Libération (LSO, Montréal)*, *Young Socialist*, and *Labor Challenge*, we have sought to educate women and win them to socialism. Theoretically the challenge is before us to continue to explore and analyse the questions and issues that come before this movement.

It has been primarily through our efforts that the core of a mass feminist movement exists around the campaign for safe legal abortions. This campaign challenges us to build that mass feminist movement in the next period.

APPENDIX

This appendix is designed to clarify the differences in this dispute. A brief outline of the differences follow —

- 1) The amendments to the 1973 Women's Liberation Resolution and the LSA/LSO Plenum Report reject the concept that a mass abortion law repeal campaign can be built at this time.
- 2) The amendments no longer situate the abortion campaign at the centre of our women's liberation work.
- 3) The amendments reject the traditional form of united front coalitions to encompass all forces that agree on the basic aim, as applied to our abortion campaign work.

The amendments as put forward in the amended resolution and the recently published plenum report constitute a change in line in our women's liberation work. In fact, the amendments constitute a reversal of the line of the original resolution.

CAN WE BUILD A MASS MOVEMENT AT THIS TIME?

Despite the growing demand for safe legal abortions, and the broadening sentiment that exists, the repeal movement is not yet a mass movement in the physical sense of the word.

The amendments to the P.C. (*LSA-LSO Political Committee*) Resolution put forward new

concepts not put forward in the original resolution. The first is that the mass feminist movement in this country will not be built through the present campaign for abortion law repeal. The question is thus posed: how will a mass movement be built? Although there is no blueprint for the future development of a mass movement, and Marxists are not inclined to make sweeping predictions, revolutionaries have a strategy that projects the building of a mass movement. Secondly, the amendments no longer centre the abortion campaign at the centre of our women's liberation work. Thirdly, the amendments pose some reasons why the repeal campaign has not become a mass movement. The problems cited are false.

First, on the question of how a mass movement will develop, in the original resolution we said (Page 9, Paragraph 2) "The core of a mass feminist movement already exists around the question (abortion law repeal)." This struggle for the repeal of anti-abortion laws is demonstrating that women **can** unite around the clear demand. Although the upsurge of the new feminist movement is not even half a decade old, it has already revealed the struggle around this issue is the central one for the development of the movement into a mass feminist movement." This section of the resolution has been **DELETED**.

The P.C. Majority justifies the deletion of this view with the argument that it is a schematic and formal view and incorrectly attempts to predict the future developments of the women's liberation movement in Canada. But in fact it is necessary for us as revolutionaries to pose a mass action strategy and build a mass movement around the issues or campaigns around which women are moving. The fact is that the abortion campaign, at this time, by itself, poses a mass action perspective for the movement. This campaign is presently the means through which a mass movement can be built — is something else posed? I think not. That does not exclude other issues or campaigns emerging. But the abortion campaign reflects the present reality, right now; the repeal campaign poses the way forward to building a mass feminist movement.

Supporters of the P.C. Majority have to put forward their view of how a mass movement will be built at this time. The amendments drop the concept that the abortion campaign is the means at this time. This position reflects a retreat from our mass action strategy -- this position puts into question the single-issue mass action approach.

Secondly, the amendments pose several so-called "objective" problems blocking the development of a mass repeal campaign at this time. The problems cited are false. The challenge to build a mass movement, in the face of abstention and opposition of all other left forces rests primarily on our forces at this time. The failure to build a mass movement at this time cannot be blamed on the masses of women, as the amended resolution poses.

On page fifteen, under the section entitled the "Abortion Campaign", the amended women's liberation resolution says: "The difficulties in building the abortion campaign are rooted in the objective problems facing the feminist movement."

What follows that statement are three points which attempt to outline the objective problems. They are:

- 1) "Not since the suffrage movement have women attempted to launch an independent, co-ordinated, Canada-wide struggle for their rights".
- 2) "It is a big step for (a woman) to move from questioning her role in society or even from a partial understanding of her oppression to join an organized campaign against aspects of her oppression."
- 3) "Several alternatives are posed to women; e.g., personal liberation, counter-institutions, lobbying for women's rights, etc."

These factors which are cited above incorrectly put the blame on the masses of

women for not having the consciousness or experience or confidence to build a mass movement. This is not a Marxist approach; we do not put the blame on the masses of women. What is posed is a crisis of leadership.

If all the objective factors are ripe, then what is posed is a problem of leadership. What is needed to lead the struggle forward is a leadership capable of doing that. The problem of leadership exists on two levels, the most important being the default of all other left forces from the campaign. The other aspect of the leadership question is the role our movement is able to play as a small party with limited resources. The challenge therefore is before the movement and the leadership of the left, not the fault of the masses of women.
(emphases by the Web Ed.)

The amendments to the resolution no longer cite the abortion campaign as the centre of our women's liberation work. Words like "coming to the fore" or "forefront" are used. The change in terms is confusing. The Political Resolution (Bulletin No. 31) now before this convention, only mentions the abortion campaign in passing; although in the draft version presented to the Plenum in December, the campaign was described "The focus of this intervention is the building of a mass movement for the repeal of the anti-abortion laws." The projection of building a mass movement has been dropped.

In the recently published Plenum Report by comrade Henderson in the list of tasks before us -- the abortion campaign -- stands as the third item, underneath women's studies. It is now not clear what weight the P.C. Majority give to the abortion campaign.

Not only is this the only campaign that at this time poses mass action to women, it is the only part of the feminist movement that poses outward action. Almost every other part of the movement has been bought off to some degree by the ruling class in this country.

Our mass action strategy is designed to provide us with a lever in the historical process. A small party such as ours has to concentrate its efforts. The abortion repeal movement is an opportunity for us to reach out to masses of people normally not within our hearing. We want to continue to push this campaign to the centre of struggles of women, to organize a mass movement that can win. In this period, it is primarily through campaigns like the single issue abortion struggle that we can affect history. Witness the work our comrades in the SWP* were able to do, in building the mass action single issue campaign -- the antiwar movement. (*during the historic era of the U.S. Socialist Workers Party 1921-1973, one of the founding pillars of the Fourth International -- Web Ed. note).
(emphasis by the Web Ed.)

It is through the campaigns we carry that we are able to project the seriousness of our party to the masses and to the left also, to recruit to the party.

UNITED FRONT COALITION

Although the right to abortion is a burning issue, the coalitions designed to give it organized expression as yet have won only limited support. The coalitions are quite narrow and do not reflect a genuine coalition of forces participating in the ongoing activities and leadership of the campaign. Genuine united fronts involve diverse forces on a consistent basis on a single or agreed upon themes or demands.

As a result of the narrowness of the coalition, our forces have had to substitute themselves and carry the bulk of the organizational (work) of the campaign. This has been an ongoing

problem for our work in this area. Most recently at the second cross country conference of the Canadian Women's Coalition held in Toronto many new forces were attracted to the campaign. Although many diverse organizations and individuals gathered together at the Public Rally on Friday night the conference itself did not attract substantial forces to it. This fact leaves the burden of the campaign on the shoulders of the LSA/LSO. One of the problems is that our forces are sometimes overextended and sometimes inexperienced and unable to move out and work with other forces. This, however, is not the crucial problem.

What is crucial is our political approach to building the campaign and the coalition. The Plenum Report on women's liberation puts forward a totally new concept for building the repeal movement and the coalition. On page four, the last paragraph, the document says "The original July draft had reflected a disorientation that started to take place in our work last spring. We were beginning to drift away from viewing the abortion campaign as an application of our transitional strategy to the feminist movement, and as an integral and important part of the feminist movement." What was this disorientation we faced? What is this new view of building the repeal campaign? Last spring, we moved out boldly to build the repeal campaign -- we adopted such slogans as "Every Mother a Willing Mother, Every Child a Wanted Child" to more sensitively orient to the masses of women. We projected a mass petition campaign to reach broader and broader layers of support. The repeal campaign took on the opposition forces, the "right to life" and for the first time we were able to beat them in a debate situation.

Since that time, the P.C. Majority comrades have come to the decision that this period marked a disorientation in the campaign. The slogan "Every Mother..." was challenged as not being feminist and then later dropped altogether. In fact, at the recent conference of the Canadian Women's Coalition, we argued against forces in the coalition carrying that slogan. This seems to be a new concept of the campaign, a new view of the coalition.

In the original resolution, we viewed the coalitions as (Page 25, paragraph 4) "profoundly feminist organizations." This was deleted from the amended resolution.

These amendments, along with our decision to drop the slogan "Every Mother..." and the decision to drop the petition, in part because of the wording, "a matter between a woman and her doctor" would seem to drop our concept of a genuine united front of diverse forces based on agreement with the demand for repeal and the slogan "A Woman's Right to Choose". It is not desirable to lay down other conditions on support for the coalition. It only serves to narrow the support for the campaign. Such false concepts of imposing only radical or feminist concepts on the coalition is sectarian and will only block the progress of the campaign.

It is not necessary for us to purge the coalition of such popular concepts as "Every Mother..." as we did at the recent conference. We want women to unite on the basis of support for the main demand and theme. To oppose such other popular slogans that express the sentiment of broader layers can only be called sectarian. (emphasis by the Web Ed.)

Comrade Henderson, in a report to the plenum, reported, "But the slogans that *we as Trotskyists* inject into the campaign are ones that clearly pose and intensify the feminist character of the campaign; that is, slogans which pose a perspective of women struggling for their rights." As Trotskyists, we support the main demand of the coalition, Repeal of the Abortion Laws, and the theme A Woman's Right to Choose. After that, we intervene with our propaganda as socialists. We do not impose socialist concepts on the coalitions, so why would we carry a campaign to impose a narrow view of feminism on the coalition. If we are to build a movement that is to win, then we must build it primarily around the main demand and theme of

the coalition.

In summary, the previous line of our movement expressed in the 1971 Plenum Report and the original draft resolution of the 1973 convention outlined clearly a perspective for building the single-issue mass action abortion campaign as the centre of our work -- not to the exclusion of interventions in other areas but as the focus of our women's liberation work. The amendments and plenum report clearly change that line. I support the original line of the movement as expressed in this document.

(end of document}

(See also, listing at W3-Women's Liberation-JournalsPt.3-Labor Challenge 1970-1974, appearing in W15a:_

#72-3 *Meaning of U.S. abortion victory (Canadian abortion campaigner) (at W15a)*

#72-3 *(Box:) Morgentaler prosecuted, LC interview of Joan Campana (at W15a)*